

Concordia

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Summary: When music and art collide, it will make the most perfect elementâ€"harmony.

1. Chapter I: Hopeless but Hopeful

Mikan shifted her weight, shuffling the backpack on her shoulder as she stepped inside the music store.

Inside, a country song was playing. Mikan stride along the rows of music albums, caressing the shelves with her finger and stopping from time to time to pick an album randomly. For her, this is the best place to get lost in. She could be here for a day, or even forever.

Then she proceed with the music instruments section. She played with the piano keys, not minding if it's not on. She sees the acoustic guitar hanging on the wooden wall and slowly approached it. She strum a little and hum a song. It's been years since she last held a guitar.

"Jasmine has been waiting for you," Tono said, observing Mikan while smiling.

Tono Akira is the owner of the store. He has known Mikan for a long time and has reserved the guitar, Jasmine (as named by Mikan), for her.

Mikan whipped her head, shyly returning the guitar back to its place. She sighed.

"I'm still quite short. Give me three months", she replied.

"You're always saying that."

"I got fired from my previous work. Just great."

"Again?"

"Yup. You know how I can't stand people who act bossy and belittle people like me," Mikan replied in a bored tone.

"Wait, are we talking about that old and bald manager of yours?"

"The one and only. That douchebag has crossed the line this time."

"That sucks."

"I know right."

They both paused.

"Why don't you find yourself another job?"

"That... That's what I'm going to do."

"Goodluck on your job hunting expedition," Tono said, saluting on Mikan as he grinned.

"Thanks," Mikan said, wearing a hopeful smile.

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All the jobs written in the classified ads section of the newspaper she was holding has been crossed out. They're looking for applicants who are fresh graduates. Unfortunately, fate doesn't seemed to work out for Mikan. She wasn't able to finished her studies due to financial reasons, stopping when she was almost halfway of the semester in college to give way to her younger brother who is currently in high school.

'God, This is going nowhere', she thought as she buried her face in her hands. Taking a break, she walked along the streets of Tokyo, eyeing every shop she passed by.

"Hi there, miss!"

Mikan was startled, stopping on tracks. A blonde man suddenly appeared in front of her. He has shoulder length hair. He is wearing leather boots and a furry purple sweater.

"Oh, sorry! I must've surprised you! I didn't intend any harm. Anyway, I'm Narumi Anjo and I think I could help you with your little predicament, young miss", Narumi cheerfully said.

"Huh?", Mikan asked, her amber eyes staring at him in confusion.

"Are you looking for an instant job?"

"Uh, sort of."

"Then I might just be what you're looking for", Narumi said, winking at Mikan which she finds creepy.

"Uhm, no thanks. Not interested", Mikan said apologetically. Eager to get away from the man as soon as possible, she started walking away.

"Wait! Hear me out first!", Narumi insists.

'Damn it. Why can't he just leave me alone?'

"Sorry mister but I really have to go", Mikan said as she brisked up her pace, not looking back.

"Ages 19-23, willing to pay at a high amount!", Narumi shouted from a distance.

'She's gone', he thought upsettingly.

Mikan was already three shops away when her feet gradually stopped. The last words Narumi said keep resonating on her ears. She started walking backwards until she reached Narumi who was fanning himself with the brown envelope on his hand, exhausted from standing for two hours.

"What did you just said?"

Narumi turned his face behind. As soon as he saw Mikan, his face lit up.

"You came back!"

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A/N: Hope this will turn out well and the characters would not seemed OOC. First multichapter fic, wasn't really planning it at the first place. Amateur writing. :)

2. Chapter II: Agreement

"Here's your blueberry donut, mango crepe, Espresso, and cafe latte."

The waitress served their orders. Aside from Narumi and Mikan, only a few customers were inside Le ArÃ´me. The sweet aroma of coffee wafted through the cold air in the coffee shop.

"Any additional, sir, ma'am?"

"Mikan?", Narumi asked.

"No, thank you. This is enough."

"Enjoy!", the waitress said as she bowed and left.

Mikan took a small bite on her donut.

"So Mikan, now we have formally introduced ourselves to each other, I guess it's time we discuss what's this job I'm talking about. I hope this won't make you change your mind."

Narumi handed a brown envelope to Mikan.

"What's this?"

"See for yourself."

Mikan opened the brown envelope and checked what's inside.

"What do you see?", Narumi asked as he laid the coffee on the table and placed his hands on top of his chin.

"A picture...of...a naked woman."

"You got it right! It's a nude painting done by my nephew. That piece won him an award."

"Why are you telling me this? What does this have to do with the job?"

"I'll get straight to the point. I am offering you a job as a nude model for my nephew's new project. It would be a four-series painting that would be called 'Naked.' It will be included in an exhibit event."

"I... A n-nude model?!"

"Yes."

"B-But... I don't think I can do this."

"I know what you're thinking, Mikan. It's normal to worry. But I can promise and guarantee you that that this would be done with utmost professionalism. My nephew has been in the field for two years."

"How much would I get from this?"

"Normally, it ranges from 6000 to 9000 yen. But we are willing to pay on your preferred price as long as this project would be made possible. Think about it."

_'My guitar. I have a few savings but it's not enough', _Mikan thought deeply.

"12000. That's my preferred price."

"12000, it is. So are you in?"

"I'll do it."

"Really?", Narumi asked in glee.

"This isn't just an issue of financial need. I'm betting my dignity as a person here. Can I trust you in this?", Mikan said with a hint of warning in her voice.

"Your identity will be safe with us. And yes, you can trust us", Narumi replied, his gaze softening.

"When will I start?"

"You see, my nephew hates procrastinating so I think tomorrow we can finally go to his studio," Narumi said, scratching the back of his head.

"Right away?", Mikan asked worriedly.

"Well, he has a deadline to follow and upcoming projects so..."

"Right. I understand."

"You know what, I think you and my nephew would make a great pair", Narumi randomly said while

Mikan was asking for some sugar to a waitress, unable to clearly hear what he said.

"What?"

"Oh, nevermind. Just finish your food," Narumi said, smiling at Mikan.

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"It's fucking 2 am in the morning. What the hell do you want, Narumi?", an irritated, sleepy Natsume said to the person on the phone.

"Oh, Natsume dear! Did I woke you up?", Narumi said in a cheery voice.

"You called just to ask me that? I'm hanging up."

"No, no, no wait! I have a great news for you!"

"Stop wasting my time. Just spill it already."

"I found you a model for your project and mind you, she's a cutie!"

No reply.

"Anyway, I will go there tomorrow and I'll bring her with me. Her price is 12000 yen. Cool with you?"

No reply.

"Cool! Alright, I'll leave you at peace! Sleep tight, my dear nephew!", Narumi bid him farewell.

"Finally", he muttered.

He throw his phone at the space beside him and dropped his body back on the bed, continuing his deep slumber.

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A/N: I don't really know how much nude models get. I just based it on money conversion (with my country's).

3. Chapter III: Tension

Narumi fetched Mikan to the same place they first met with his own car. Today, she will finally meet his nephew.

"Are you nervous?", Narumi asked, gazing at Mikan who was looking out through the window of the car.

"Quite."

Narumi only chuckled in response. Mikan looked down at her lap, fumbling the hem of her navy blue polo.

"Can I..."

"Yes?"

"Nothing."

'You cannot back out now, Mikan! This is just a one-time thing and that's it! You'll just pose naked and he'll paint you. What's the big deal about that? But in front of a man?! A compete stranger even!'

Mikan was snapped in her thoughts when the car's engine stopped and Narumi spoke.

"We're here!"

It wasn't really an art studio. It was a small house, at least that's how it looks from the outside. They went inside and Mikan quickly surveyed the area. It is big enough to accommodate a large group of people. The design was minimalist. The floor tiles and walls are immaculately white. There aren't a lot of home appliances except those that are generally found in a house. In every part of the house, art stuff can be seen. Books about art. Cans of paints messily placed on old newspapers. A palette that hasn't been cleaned near the kitchen sink. Paintbrushes of different sizes dabbed in a jar containing water. Sketches of naked women posted on the walls. Some only shows their back but mostly are facing front and detailed.

'It's true. From the looks of it, his nephew must've mastered nude painting', Mikan thought. Surprisingly, when Mikan stares at it, she doesn't find it inappropriate. It doesn't evoke a sense of eroticism. Just pure art. Its rawness is what makes it beautiful.

She noticed a painting stand beside the window with a canvas covered with cloth on it. Curious what's inside, she gently lift the cloth.

'So he's also painting sceneries?'

"What are you doing?", a deep voice spoke behind her.

She turned to face the owner of the voice and was greeted by a raven-haired lad with an earring on his right ear, leaning against the wall and crossing his arms. He is only wearing a sweatpants so

his built chest were clearly visible to Mikan. His red pools was staring deep at her amber ones.

"I...I'm sorry. I'm just...I just wanted to see it, that's all. Sorry for-"

"Oh, Natsume dear! There you are! Don't you miss your uncle? Come here!", Narumi interfered, aiming to embrace Natsume but he was able to dodge it.

"Save it, bastard."

Natsume grabbed his white shirt hanging on the lamp stand. Even with clothes on, his fit body is still noticeable. He plopped his body on the couch as he lazily took the remote control and switched channels, putting one arm behind his head.

"Natsume, this is Mikan Sakura and she will be your model. Mikan, this is my nephew and the artist himself, Natsume Hyuuga. We will divide it in two days so two paintings at a day. It'll probably take 3-5 hours. Anyway, I already discussed the terms and conditions regarding this matter to the both of you so I hope there wouldn't be any problems. Now that's everything settled, I'll be seeing you guys later because I still have an errand to run. Mikan, goodluck! And Natsume, you behave. Take care of her. If something happens, call me. You two get along! Adieu!", Narumi said as he dashed out of the house.

'Now what?', Mikan thought as she found herself standing mercilessly before Natsume. Her knees feel like buckling.

The television seemed to bore Natsume as he pressed the off button on the remote and landed his gaze on Mikan. He stood up and walked toward her, putting an ample distance between them.

"Remove your clothes and wear this. Turn to your right, the CR's there", Natsume said as he handed a white, knee-length robe to Mikan.

Mikan stepped out of the comfort room and tugged on the hem of the robe. The robe is so flimsy and thin that it felt like it doesn't really cover anything at all. She folded her clothes and carefully placed it inside her backpack.

Seeing the door of the room where Natsume entered left opened, she knocked and let herself room was spacious. The three walls were painted with different subjects except for one which was left blank. Aside from the plain canvas readily prepared, a large sofa bed and a long table at the center occupied the room. Natsume looked up, noticing her presence.

"I'm done", Mikan meekly said.

Natsume took his art kit with him as he made his way to Mikan who backed away.

"Sit there", Natsume ordered as he closed the door.

Mikan sat at the sofa bed, keeping her legs together. She was finally face to face with Natsume. The thought of being alone with a guy in a

room terrifies her.

"Uhm, why do you have to lock it? I mean, nobody will come", Mikan spoke first, trying to break the awkward atmosphere.

"You sounded as if we're going to do something that no one should see", Natsume teased.

"What do you- That's not what I meant!", Mikan retorted in defense, blushing madly when she realized what he meant.

"My friends usually come to my house unannounced. You wouldn't want to be walked on to naked, would you?"

"I-I see."

"You can now remove the robe."

"Pardon?"

"What? Didn't you heard what I just said? Or do you want me to do it for you? I don't mind at all."

"I... No! I can do it by myself!", Mikan replied, muttering "pervert" at the end.

Natsume smirked as he watched her.

"Stop staring at me! It's becoming uncomfortable."

"Nevermind. I would still see that", Natsume said idly, tearing his gaze away from her.

Mikan sat there completely naked in front of Natsume. Her head is lowered, unable to directly look Natsume in the eyes, as she tucked her hands between her thighs.

As for the first session, Mikan placed her chin on top of her hands settled at the headrest. Natsume instructed her to sit with her back facing him and bend her torso to the right. Unsatisfied, he walked toward her and absent-mindedly placed his hand on her hips to adjust her torso a bit more to the right. Mikan jolted as she felt a calloused hand on her hips. A surge of electricity passed due to the contact of skin to skin, taking them both in surprise.

"I-I can manage", Mikan said as Natsume retrieved his hand.

Natsume has returned to his seat. It was a fleeting moment yet he could still feel the smoothness of her skin against his palm. _'What was that?_', he thought.

Meanwhile, Mikan was having the same thoughts as him. Good thing, he cannot see her face. _'His hands..._ _They're so cold, yet I...I feel warm... and tingly'__, Mikan thought, feeling a burning sensation on the part where he had touched her.

He began to draw the outline of her body onto the canvass. Natsume's eyes followed the curve of her hips, dangerously reaching her buttocks. His eyes flickered and went back to the canvass.

After that, Natsume started mixing colors. Even with the absence of light, Mikan has a naturally fair complexion so he add more white. When he has finally laid out the colors he needed, the brush strokes finally do its magic. It took him half an hour to finish the first painting.

"Turn around", Natsume said who busied himself in putting back the caps of the tube paints he used.

Mikan squeezed her eyes shot as she spun around. When Natsume was done, he lifted his head and his breathe hitched for a moment. Unintentionally, his eyes trailed from her head to her toe. Mikan noticed this, suddenly feeling conscious of her body. She was about to cover her bare chest but stopped herself from doing so by gripping the soft cushion of the sofa bed she was sitting on.

'Be professional', Mikan mentally reminded herself.

Regaining composure, he cleared his throat before speaking.

"Lie on your side. Bend your left knee. Your chin must be angled on top of your right shoulder supported with your right hand."

Mikan did what she was told. _'This is so embarrassing! I feel like I'm committing a sin!'_, she thought, curling her foot. Fortunately, she was able to hide the worry in her face and put on a blank expression.

Natsume was having a hard time concentrating on sketching, pretending that he was examining the contours of her body when in all honesty he was admiring it. Mikan has a slim and healthy figure. Her stomach was flat. Her chest is neither big nor small, just the right size. She got toned thighs and legs. Her most precious area was neat as if she really prepared herself for this. 'Not bad', he thought to himself.

The second session took longer than the first. From time to time, their eyes would accidentally meet until one of them breaks it. They will both act unaffected by it as if nothing happened but deep inside, they are being taken up by a variety of emotions they can't decipher...

For now.

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A/N: I'm actually an arts student (still developing) myself and I experienced nude drawing. It seemed normal to me, maybe because the model was of the same gender as me. Anyway, this is how I got the idea. :)

4. Chapter IV: Seven Minutes in Heaven

"Rest while you wait for Narumi", Natsume said, leaving the room.

Mikan put on the robe. She craned her neck, massaging her sore muscles. The second session was finally done. She didn't think that posing for hours would be this tiring. Natsume came back with two

cans of soda in his hands, closing the door with his foot. He gave the other one to her.

"Uh, thanks."

Mikan quietly sipped hers while Natsume chugged on his drink. They both sighed. He placed his now empty can on the table and began talking.

"Age?"

"Huh?"

"What's your age?"

"21."

"Does your parents know about this?"

"They...don't."

"Why did you accept it? You're not even used to this."

"I-I have my reasons", Mikan replied, gripping the can.

"Everybody has."

There was silence before Mikan broke it.

"If you don't mind me asking, did you paint the walls of this room?"

"I did. You liked them?"

She faced him, nodding her head vigorously.

"That one... Why is it blank?", Mikan asked, pointing to the direction of the wall left out.

"I've ran out of paint."

"Oh."

"Kidding. I have my reason."

Mikan stifled a soft laughter, realizing that he mimicked her line. Natsume watched her from the corner of his eye. She looks...

Lovely.

"I kinda envy you", Mikan confessed.

Natsume did not reply, waiting for her to continue.

"Your talent. Your success. While me... I have to go through a lot", Mikan said, her eyes wearing a sad expression as she played with the can on her hand.

"It wasn't easy for me either", he murmured.

Natsume fished out his phone from his pocket. He put one earphone on his right ear and offered the other one to her. Mikan scooted closer to him. She was about to take it when he inserted the earphone in her ear himself, tucking loose strands of her hair in the process.

A song which Mikan recognized played.

"Good choice, huh", Mikan said, grinning.

"You know this song?"

"Of course! Who doesn't know about them? I'm an avid fan!", Mikan proudly stated.

"But aren't girls... Aren't you girls into mellow?"

"Not all girls. I like listening and playing songs by boy bands myself."

"You play?"

"Before."

"Before?"

"I stopped playing guitar... Unfavorable circumstances."

"You should play me some time."

"If we still see each other", Mikan said with a playful smile.

The song ended. The playlist was on shuffle and a new song was playing.

"Don't you get distracted?"

"Distracted in what?"

"You're a nude artist. You draw and paint naked women. Don't you get distracted?"

"I don't..."

He paused then continued.

"You're the first one."

Mikan was in the middle of drinking when he caught her off-guard. She didn't expect that kind of answer from him.

Natsume stared at her, leaning closer until his lip was on the other end of the can Mikan was holding on her lips. Slowly, he snatched it away from her grasp and placed it on the table. They're only a breathe away from each other without the can blocking the distance between them. They held each other's gaze.

"You distract me, Mikan," Natsume said in his husky voice, before capturing her lips.

It was a simple touching of the lips yet its innocence and tenderness seemed to melt all of her worries away. Mikan savored the kiss, closing her eyes. She placed her hands on his chest while Natsume grabbed her by her nape, bringing her to lay flat on her back on the sofa bed. This caused the earphones to be pulled out of their ears, still playing a song. Each second, the kiss turned a bit aggressive and needier with Natsume being the dominant one.

Mikan was too engrossed in their lip-locking that she didn't noticed Natsume's hand working its way on the tie of her robe. It loosened. He caressed her shoulder, partially removing the robe in the process. He broke the kiss as he planted soft, damp kisses on her neck, nuzzling her sweet scent. Mikan let out a soft moan and it was music to his ears. He went further stopping until he reached the valley between her chest which was still covered by the robe. Caught in the heat of the moment, just as he was about to put a hand inside her robe, a loud knock pulled them both out of their reverie.

'Shit', he muttered angrily.

"Wait here, I'll just get the door", Natsume told Mikan, standing up.

Mikan quickly disengaged her body from Natsume and sat up to fix herself. She tied the robe tightly back to her waist which she noticed was loosened just now. When he was away, she took the remaining content of her drink in big gulp to calm her erratic heart.

"Who the hell-", Natsume said with an annoyed expression but was cut off when the door was fully opened.

"So how did it went?", Narumi asked excitedly. In Natsume's mind, he is not sure whether he was referring to the project or their make-out session just a few seconds ago.

"Well, until you came," Natsume muttered, walking past him and raking his hair.

"Mikan!"

"I-I'll just c-change."

Mikan immediately walked to the door and left Narumi in the room by himself.

'Did I missed something?', he thought.

The bathroom was large enough for her to pace around. Mikan was frantically talking to herself, walking back and forth.

"Relax, Mikan. Act like yourself. Forget it. It didn't happened. Nothing happened. Erase! Erase! You didn't kissed him back. You didn't... The robe! It's... Oh, fuck. Okay. This won't happen again. Tomorrow, this will be all done. You'll get the money then you'll never see him again. That's right!"

Mikan changed to her clothes. She was walking toward the living room where Narumi is waiting when she and Natsume bump to each other.

"I-I'll go. Narumi's wai-"

"Nice doing business with you, Mikan Sakura. Can't wait for tomorrow," Natsume whispered sensually on her ear, sending shivers on her body. Mikan stood there frozen on her spot until she heard Narumi's voice.

"Are you done, Mikan?"

"Y-Yes."

"Let's go."

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"So what can you say? How was it? Did Natsume guide you?"

"It's...fine, just awkward at first but he did. He guide me."

"Hmm."

"Can I ask a question?"

"Go on."

"Why is he like that to you? I mean he's not calling you uncle."

Narumi chuckled.

"We were never blood-related. His parents were a good friend of mine. They were really kind. I was there when his mother gave birth to him...but I wasn't there when they died in a car accident. Ever since then, I promise to take care of Natsume in their place so I took custody of him. He was never the social type even on his childhood years, always locking himself in his room. Natsume was really traumatized. I consulted a therapist and he advised me to engage him in art therapy. At first, it didn't showed any sign of positive changes. Until one day, I saw him staying up late and doing his very first artwork when he was sixteen. A drawing of a girl. That's the time he started showing fascination in art."

Mikan quietly listened, absorbing the story she just heard until curiosity got into her.

"Who's that girl?"

"I don't know. But I believe that that girl is the one who inspired him. If we ever get the chance to meet, I wanted to thank her. Natsume was able to cope up and even made friends. Art is life for him. That is his passion. His first love. It never bothered me that he's rude to me as long as he's happy. I could never forget when he gave me a painting he did by himself as a birthday present."

"I guess that is his way of saying thank you."

Narumi simply stared at Mikan.

"Did something happened between the two of you?"

"Wh-What made you say that?!"

"I don't know. Just a hunch", Narumi shrugged, putting his eyes back on the road before continuing, "I saw you guys talking before we leave. Didn't know you were that close already."

Heat started to creep on Mikan's face.

"He's just-"

"You were also acting strange when I came back."

Mikan recalled the unexpected events that occurred between her and Natsume, blushing even more.

"N-Nothing happened! We just talked, that's all!"

"I'm just kidding," Narumi said as he flashed her a smile and messed her hair.

_ 'What is this strange feeling?' _

5. Chapter V: Evasion

The next day, the same routine followed. Mikan went to Natsume's place and posed for the remaining last two sessions. Narumi left them to meet someone regarding the exhibit event.

Impressively, Mikan finally overcome her shyness and posed like she has been doing it for a long time. It came out sexy yet still modest. She looks ethereal with her long brown hair sprawled on the sofa bed, complementing her skin tone.

However, the tension between them still haven't loosened up especially after what happened yesterday. Natsume did not know what took over him to tell that to her. More so, he expected her to push him away which she did not. She even responded to his kiss with the same fervor as him.

_ 'We almost did it'_, Natsume thought.

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"Playing matchmaker, huh?", Hotaru Imai said as she drink her champagne and went back to typing on her laptop.

Narumi was having a fancy dinner with the organizer of the exhibit event to be held in Contemporary Arts Gallery. He smiled to himself as he received a reply from Mikan. His plan is working. She actually believed that he was stuck in traffic.

"Uh-huh. Natsume's been tiring himself too much with all those projects. Give him a break, Imai."

"I don't care about him being workaholic. Just make sure that you'll give me the quality of work I'm asking for."

"If you must know, Natsume, my man is the best at-!"

"Whatever. I don't wanna hear it."

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"You hungry?", Natsume asked nonchalantly.

"Not really, thanks," Mikan quickly replied, not wanting to prolong the conversation. She wanted to avoid Natsume at all cost even if her stomach secretly grumbled. She left the room and changed to her clothes as soon as possible.

She rested her body on the couch at the living room. Her phone vibrated. Narumi told her in a text message that he will probably be late due to the heavy traffic. When she saw Natsume getting near, Mikan hurriedly kept

her phone and pretended to be asleep.

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Natsume found Mikan sleeping on the couch and he can't help but be mesmerized at her calm state. He quietly sat beside her and placed her head on his shoulder. He caressed her cheeks.

"I wish she was you", Natsume softly whisper.

Soon after, they both fell asleep.

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When Narumi arrived, he caught them still sleeping so he took the chance and take a photo of them. Being as keen as ever, Natsume woke up first and glared at him. Mikan was awoken by the shuffling noises on the couch. She yawned and stretched her arms, forgetting that she just laid her head on Natsume's shoulder a while ago.

"Oh, Mikan! I'm sorry if I took so long!", Narumi said dramatically to convince Mikan.

"It's alright, it's alright," Mikan said, waving her hand.

"I'll just set up the car. You follow. I'll wait for you outside."

Mikan nodded as she slipped her backpack on her shoulder. Suddenly, Natsume, who was sitting beside her, spoke.

"When can I see you again?"

Mikan motioned her head to the side. She suddenly remembers what Narumi and Natsume said.

\_'I don't know. But I believe that that girl is the one who inspired him.'\_

\_'I wish she was you.'\_

"I'm afraid we'll never see each other again", she replied, standing up and taking a few strides.

Mikan was facing her back so she cannot see the confused expression on Natsume's face.

"What?"

"I just came here for the money. Now that my job is done, I am not to set foot here again."

"What are you saying? Yesterday, we-"

"Yesterday was a mistake."

"Mistake? Stop shitting on me, Mikan."

"Let's forget about it. It didn't mean anything. We just got carried away. It wasn't part of the deal. I gotta go."

"Mikan! Wait! Damn it!"

"Don't follow me."

Then she walked away, leaving an aggravated Natsume in the living room.

"Fuck", he cursed.

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"Any progress with Natsume?", Narumi teased.

"I told you nothing's going between me and Natsume", Mikan replied in bored tone.

\_'Is that so? We'll see'\_, he thought. The smile on his face doesn't seemed to falter.

"Anyway, here's your payment. You should come at the exhibit. I'll text you the address", Narumi said, handing her a thick white envelope.

"Thanks."

The car stopped by the place they met.

"Are you sure you don't want me to bring you directly at home? It's pretty late."

Mikan shook her head.

"I can handle myself. I enjoy long walks", Mikan said, smiling.

"Take care! 'Til next time!"

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\_'Next time? There will be no more next time... She must be special.



I don't have the right to take her place', Mikan thought, feeling downcast. She straightened herself and happily greet the people inside the house.

"I'm home!"

## 6. Chapter VI: Lost and Gained

Narumi came to Natsume's place to tell him about what he and Hotaru talked about regarding the procedures on the coming exhibit event. Sitting on the couch, he happily chewed on an apple.

"Call her."

"Who?"

"That model."

"You mean, Mikan? But why? Weren't you able to finish the project last night?"

Natsume sent a bored look on Narumi who seemed to have hit a jackpot with his widened eyes.

"Is my nephew crushing on someone?", Narumi said teasingly, nudging him on the arm.

"Just do it!"

"Okay, okay!"

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Seeing the caller ID, Mikan turned off her cellphone. She doesn't want to have any connections with either of them anymoreâ€"Narumi, Natsume, or anything that has to do with Natsume. She has already made herself clear with him that night.

She stuffed her phone on her pocket and entered inside the music store.

"Hi," she greeted, surprising Tono who has his back faced on her.

"Mikan! What brings you here? Don't tell me you're fired again!"

She laughed.

"No, no. Actually... I came here to buy the guitar."

"Are you sure you're Mikan?" Tono said, eyeing Mikan skeptically.

"100 percent."

"You're not involved into some illegal activity, are you?"

"The last time I checked, not" Mikan said, shaking her head slowly as she placed a thick bundle of cash on the count

"Then where the hell did you get this money to buy the guitar?!"

"Hey, I have a job!", Mikan said, as she crossed her arms.

"You earned this much for two days?!"

"Silly! That's half of my savings and salary. Let's just say... I did well in those two days and my boss was generous!", Mikan said, trying to dismiss the suspicion of Tono.

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

Twenty missed calls had already been made yet Mikan still haven't answered.

"Just keep on ringing her!"

"Why are we even doing this? My phone's dying", Narumi said, pouting.

"I know! Where does she live?"

"You can't go there."

"Why?"

"Because she doesn't let me get her straight to her house."

"What do you mean?"

"I never take her directly to where she lives. She insists to be dropped by the coffee shop we met then she walks home by herself."

"What?!"

Narumi nodded innocently. Natsume sighed.

"Then I'll go there myself. Where's that coffee shop?"

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"Finally!" Mikan hugged the guitar tightly to her chest, rubbing her cheeks on its surface.

"You better take care of Jasmine or else...", Tono reminded Mikan as he watched her.

"Of course, I will! I miss playing guitar!"

Mikan placed the guitar inside its case as she happily exited the store and headed home.

"Bye!"

Today's the exhibit event. It will last for three days. The theme is Passion and Emotion: An Artist's Being. Artists, aspiring artists, and ordinary people are free to come and see the different masterpieces displayed. People are having their pictures taken with the artworks. For an artist to see such joyous smiles on the face of viewers is such an overwhelming feeling, except with the person standing on the corner, admiring his own work. He cannot think of that right now. His eyes were serene yet there are many thoughts swarming up on his mind.

"Where is she?" Hotaru spoke, taking the space beside Natsume and crossing her arms.

Natsume looked at her questioningly.

"That model of yours. I've heard from Narumi. About time you got tamed, Hyuuga."

"That's none of your business, Imai."

"Of course, it is. I don't want my artists feeling uninspired. That would be a pain in the ass. Losing inspiration means losing money. If they lost their inspiration, the outcome would likely be unworthy to be displayed."

"Tch. Who cares about you losing money?"

"So you don't care if you lose her?"

"What crap are you saying?"

"Falling in love with that woman. Now, that's something."

He did not see it coming. Her statement was so true that it made him still. Even he himself, did not expect to fall this hard for her—"for Mikan.

"I can see so much passion and emotion in this paintings, hence the theme... Were you able to keep your hands to yourself?", Hotaru continued in a teasing tone. She really knows how push someone's buttons, especially Natsume's.

"Shut it."

"Suit yourself", Hotaru said, walking away with a playful smile.

~~~~~

Mikan was strumming her guitar, practicing for her upcoming performance tomorrow. It has been a week since she last received a call from Narumi which is a good thing, for her. However, she received a text from him, inviting her again to see the exhibit event which she did not reply and deleted.

_ 'I can do this.' _

~~~~~

"Leaving already? It's still too early", Narumi asked as he saw Natsume getting on the elevator.

"I'm not gonna say this again. Tell Imai...thanks", Natsume told reluctantly as the elevator door closed.

"Did he just?"

â€¢â€¢â€¢

Yesterday will be the last time Natsume will wait outside Le ArÃ´me or so he thought. He has been doing it for days. The coffee shop crew must've familiarized themselves with Natsume with him always standing by the door, hoping Mikan will pass by.

The sun has already set and he is still there. He looked at his wristwatch. It's already 11 pm. \_'That's the\_ \_problem. I fucking care'\_ , Natsume thought as he placed his hands on his pockets and began walking to go home.

## 8. Chapter VIII: Unexpected

Natsume stayed home all day until his college friends gatecrashed when evening came. They invited him to celebrate the success of the exhibit and for a little reunion as well. He refuses to go, however they had already put on their clothes, giving him no choice but to come as well. They went into a bar downtown. Clinking of bottles are heard.

"Ahh... Just what I need", Mochu Mochiage said.

"Why aren't you drinking Natsume? Is something wrong?" a concerned Ruka Nogi asked.

"Live a little!", Kokoro Yome said, giving Natsume a pat in the back.

Natsume brought a bottle of beer to his mouth to stop them from bothering him.

"They said there's gonna be some live show or something like that", Tobita Yuu interject.

A guy with a star tattoo on his eye grabbed a microphone and began to blabber. "Good evening everyone! The night is still young. I'm Tsubasa Andou, not that it's important. Anyway, we have some bands that we'll jam and rock with us tonight! Here they are! Hit it!"

Koko, Mochu, Ruka, and Yuu seemed to enjoy the live rock band show except Natsume so he decided to go to the comfort room. He need to get 'her' off his mind. While the last band playing, a blonde bartender, Kaname, whispered to Tsubasa.

"Woah! You guys totally rock! Now, now, before we end this rocky evening, I think we have someone with us to soothe our messed up minds. Let's hear it!"

A brunette holding a guitar came up to the stage and tapped the

microphone, earning a loud-piercing sound. She mouthed a 'sorry', feeling uneasy.

"Hey, uhm... A pleasant evening to everyone. I'm Mikan Sakura and I'm gonna sing you a... song. Hope you guys enjoy", Mikan said.

\_I wake up in the morning\_

\_Put on my face\_

\_The one that's gonna get me\_

\_Through another day\_

\_Doesn't really matter\_

\_How I feel inside\_

\_ 'Cause life is like a game sometimes\_

Natsume who was seriously pissed off with the breathy noises on the other cubicle made by two people making out, went out of the comfort room. Hearing a familiar voice, Natsume had his eyes wide open and slowly stride to see the female singer on the stage.

\_But then you came around me\_

\_The walls just disappeared\_

\_Nothing to surround me\_

\_And keep me from my fears\_

\_I'm unprotected\_

\_See how I've opened up\_

\_Oh, you've made me trust\_

\_Because I've never felt like this before\_

\_I'm naked\_

\_Around you\_

\_Does it show?\_

\_You see right through me\_

\_And I can't hide\_

\_I'm naked\_

\_Around you\_

\_And it feels so right\_

\_I never felt like this before\_

\_I'm naked\_

\_Around you\_

\_Does it show?\_

\_You see right through me\_

\_And I can't hide\_

\_I'm naked\_

\_Around you\_

\_And it feels so right\_

\_I'm naked\_

\_Oh oh yeah\_

\_Does it show?\_

\_Yeah, I'm naked\_

\_Oh oh, yeah yeah\_

\_Everyone applaud, even Natsume's friends.

><em>

\_I'm so naked around you\_

\_And I can't hide\_

\_You're gonna (you're gonna) see right through, baby\_

\_You're gonna see right through,\_

\_I'm so naked around you,\_

\_And I can't hide,\_

\_You're gonna see right through, baby\_

Before Mikan ended her performance, she gave the crowd a touching message. "Sometimes, you confined yourself in these thick walls and then someone comes and that person makes you vulnerable. When you're with them, you can totally let loose and be yourself. You can let our your true emotions. You don't have to hide everything. Whether you're sad or happy, they can see right through you and whatever they discover about you is not a reason for them to not love you and that's why you love them too. You can just be naked around them."

Mikan bowed her head, telling 'thank you's' to different directions. She went down from the stage and exited the bar, making her way on the back part of it.

"Natsume's taking too long," Ruka pointed worriedly.

"Ruka, man. Stop acting like a worried sick mother. He's a grown-up man. He's just probably...jerking off," Mochu replied, laughing at

his own joke and earning a playful punch in the arm from Yuu.

"He should've seen that singer!", Koko commented enthusiastically.

~~~~~

Mikan was stuffing her guitar on its case when her phone ring, receiving a call from an unknown number.

"Hello?"

"Mikan?"

"Yup, that's me."

"Who's this?"

"Mikan..."

Sensing someone's presence, Mikan turned and her eyes widened in surprise.

~~~~~

**\*\*A/N: Now you guys know why the artwork's title is 'Naked', the same with Avril Lavigne's song which I used in this chapter. :)\*\***

## 9. Chapter IX: Twist of Fate

"Natsume... What are you doing here?"

"You're avoiding me."

"I'm not", Mikan replied, her bangs covering her eyes.

"You're not answering Narumi's calls."

"Narumi- Was that you?"

"If you knew, would you have answered it?"

"There's nothing for us to talk about."

"You and I have an unfinished business. You know that... Do you have any idea how long I've searched for you?!"

"I didn't asked you to find me! Damn it, Natsume!"

"So that's it, huh? You'll just ran off like that and act like nothing happened?"

"Stop! Stop it, Natsume! I already told you it did not meant anything!"

"Really now? Then tell me why'd you kissed me back? You could've just push me away."

"I-I..."

"See. You're in denial. I know you felt it too."

"We're not having this conversation. I'm leaving."

Before Mikan could even walk past Natsume, he has already his firm grasp on her arm.

"No. You're coming with me. I'm not gonna let you go this time, Mikan."

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Natsume together with Mikan who was trailing behind him, struggling against his tight grip, went back inside the bar, heading to their table. He quickly grabbed the car keys lying on the table.

"Yome, I'm borrowing this. I promise, I'll bring it back," Natsume said.

"Hey! Hey! You better take care of it, Natsume!", Koko protested.

"I will."

"Don't drive while drunk!"

"I'm not drunk!", Natsume shouted from a far, waving the keys and leaving them behind.

"Isn't that the girl earlier? What is she doing with Natsume?", Ruka asked.

"Hmm, someone's getting laid tonight", Mochu jokingly said, grinning.

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Natsume parked the car and removed his seatbelt.

"Where are we? Where did you bring me?"

"I want to show you something."

Natsume intertwined his hand on hers as they made their way to the art gallery. They stopped in front of Natsume's piece. His artwork of her.

"This is..."

"You did not go so I think I'm gonna have to take you here."

"I'm sorry," Mikan apologized, feeling guilty and ashamed.

"I was there when you performed. I heard it. Everything. I heard your voice. I heard that familiar voice. That soothing voice. That voice that speaks of words of encouragement. That voice that made me believe myself again. That voice that gave me hope. That voice that made me want to live again."

"You're there?"



"Mikan, it's you. You're the girl from my memory. You're the girl I've been looking for. I thought I'm never gonna see you again."

"I don't understand."

"Do you remember when you sang near a school?"

**\*\*Flashback:\*\***

\_It was dismissal time. Natsume was about to go home when the commotion made him curious. Standing there at the road is a girl with a shoulder-length hair and eyeglasses playing her guitar. She sang a melodic song, causing students passing by to gather around and applaud her.\_

\_I love this place\_

\_But it's haunted without you\_

\_My tired heart\_

\_Is beating so slow\_

\_Our hearts sing less\_

\_Than we wanted\_

\_We wanted\_

\_Our hearts sing 'cause\_

\_We do not know\_

\_We do not know\_

\_To light the night\_

\_To help us grow\_

\_To help us grow\_

\_It is not said\_

\_I always know\_

\_You can catch me\_

\_Don't you run\_

\_Don't you run\_

\_If you live another day\_

\_In this happy little house\_

\_The fire's here to stay\_

\_To light the night\_

\_To help us grow\_

\_To help us grow\_

\_It is not said\_

\_I always know\_

\_Please don't make a fuss\_

\_It won't go away\_

\_The wonder of it all\_

\_The wonder that I made\_

\_I am here to stay\_

\_I am here to stay\_

\_Stay\_

\_The girl sang as if she was dedicating it to Natsumeâ€”as if it was really meant for him; as if she understands what he is going through. Natsume excitedly went home and made his first artwork. An unknown girl with a guitar. He was never able to get the girl's name. That girl was Mikan.\_

\_However, that would be the last time Mikan will be able to play. For how long, she does not know. She has to sell her guitar to be able to pay for her studies.\_

\_Natsume waited for Mikan the next day but she did not come. She never come anymore which saddened him. He yearned for her even if he doesn't personally know her.\_

**\*\*End of flashback.\*\***

"I did."

"I was also there. You're that mystery girl from my artwork. Ever since that day, I could never forget you. Even if I wanted to, you always find a way to get in my mind. And now, in my heart."

This made Mikan blushed.

"Mikan, I love you."

"Natsume, th-this is all so sudden. I-I don't know how to answer y-you."

"But I'm not giving you an option."

"Huh?"

"No matter what you say, how much you try to resist, I will not let you off my sight again. You cannot leave me again."

"Oh, yeah? How sure are you?", Mikan challenged.

"Because you loved me. That, I can assure," Natsume remarked, smirking before he continued.

"Actions speak louder than words. Want to continue where we left off?", Natsume whispered seductively on her ear as he hugged her from behind.

From a distance, two people were watching them.

"What did you do?!", Narumi asked in confusion.

"The usual, making myself rich", Hotaru said and smirked.

â€¢â€¢â€¢

\*\*A/N: The title of the song is 'Little House' by Amanda Seyfried.  
:)\*\*

## 10. Chapter X: Harmony

When Mochu said someone's getting laid tonight, it was actually true.

Mikan has her legs on Natsume's waist. Natsume's lips were all over hers. Their tongues were dancing in rhythm. They haven't pulled away as they trudge their way to Natsume's house. As soon as they got in, Natsume pinned her to the doorframe, making the door slammed in the process. He was unbuttoning her army-patterned long sleeves while Mikan was searching for the light switch. He was almost halfway when she pulled away.

"Not here."

Mindless about their surroundings, they tripped on a can of paint lying on the ground and both fell on the floor, laughing at their clumsiness.

Mikan's laughter died down.

"Natsume..."

"Hm?"

"I love you too", Mikan said lovingly, cupping his cheeks and giving him her angelic smile.

With that, Natsume carried her to his bedroom where the night of passion happens. Natsume gently laid her body on the bed, towering over her thin frame. Mikan suddenly became bold, lifting his shirt over his head and tossing it away. When every piece of garments were finally discarded, Natsume stopped and looked at the goddess before him. His eyes hold so many emotions. They were filled with lust, love, longing, and admiration.

"Mikan, you're so beautiful... You are art. Something that people won't be able to take their eyes off. I want to get to know more of you."

Mikan brought his hands to her lips and kissed it.

"These hands... These are the hands of the man that I will only allow to touch me like this... that I will love forever. Natsume, I want to get to know more of you too."

Natsume then kissed her while his hands explore her softness"every inch, curve, and crevice as Mikan tangled her hands on his raven locks.

Becoming one with the one you love was the happiest day for the both of them.

â€¢â€¢â€¢

Morning came. Two people were lying on the bed, enjoying each other's warmth. Mikan has Natsume's arm as her pillow while she is locked into Natsume's legs under the sheets.

Last night was...

Splendid.

Mikan intertwined her hand with Natsume's.

"Natsume? Are you awake already?"

He groaned in response.

"Did you mean what you said before? That I was the first one to distract you?"

He did not answer. Instead, he embraced her in the waist and placed his chin on the juncture between her neck and collarbone, kissing her shoulder.

"I'm thinking..."

"What is it, Natsume?"

"Since you are my girlfriend now, what if you become my permanent model?"

"Pervert."

"You know you like it", Natsume teased.

Mikan faced him as Natsume caressed her cheeks.

"Want to know the reason why I leave that wall blank?"

Mikan nodded.

"I was saving it for someone and that someone is you."

Mikan tackled Natsume, getting on top of him, her eyes glowing with enthusiasm.

"Really?"

"I just said it."

Natsume's phone alarmed, reminding him of the projects he needed to finish.

"I have so many deadlines."

"I'm taking a shower."

Natsume didn't let her go that easily, reversing their positions.

"But this position is so inviting", Natsume said lustfully, making Mikan blushed.

"D-Didn't you have to finish your p-projects? I think it's better if we-"

"It can wait."

Mikan's eyes grew wide, knowing what that means. Natsume kissed her passionately, pulling the blankets with him as they indulge themselves into an intimate session, again.

\*\*\_Fin.\_\*\*

End  
file.